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Space-based strategic intelligence programs designed to monitor Soviet activities by the mid-1980s have been either eliminated or modified by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence because of concern over space shuttle availability and a conservative approach in general toward strategic intelligence. Code-named Project Aquacade, the program is the improved follow-on to the current Rhyolite spacecraft (AW&ST May 14, p. 18) that monitor telemetry from Soviet ballistic missiles. Aquacade must be redesigned for launch on an expendable Titan-inertial upper stage booster instead of a space

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shuttle, the committee has ruled. Redesign could affect spacecraft capabilities, but the committee is concerned that shuttle program delays could delay availability of the spacecraft, an important element in monitoring Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty provisions.

Another program cut entirely from the Fiscal 1980 Defense budget was a space shuttle manned photo reconnaissance plan. Proof-of-concept flights in 1981 and 1983 with reconnaissance cameras in the payload bay could have led to three 20-day operational missions per year to supplement intelligence from unmanned spacecraft. The committee also expressed concern over use of the NASA tracking and data relay satellite system to relay intelligence from a future imaging radar reconnaissance spacecraft.

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